

PodMag Week 20

Date: 7 May 2014

Karen:

Hi and welcome to the PodMag, I'm Karen Foley.

Dave:

And I'm Dave Middleton.

Karen:

Well, I've eaten all my Easter eggs Dave, every last one of them.

Dave:

Ok, well what do you think about this new room?

Karen:

It's ok, it's private (sighs). I did think, however, that we'd sort of dealt with all the photocopying stuff, we didn't make much money last time.

Dave:

No, but this time will be different. This is the Library photocopying room, it's a very exclusive clientele here, it's not like that riff raff in Social Sciences.

Karen:

No, that's true, and people do seem to want lots of papers copied and things.

Dave:

Hold on, what's that noise? Oh it's jammed.

Karen:

Damn, it did that last time.

Dave:

Look, you fix that.

Karen:

I don't know how to fix a photocopier.

Dave:

Well I don't know how to do things like that.

Karen:

I tell you what, what I did last time was took all the paper out and closed the door.

Dave:

Well let's try that. Ok, so err, what we gonna do?

Karen:

What we gonna do? Well, I've got a list, err where is it? Yep.

Dave:

Ok, so top of your list is 'This Student Life'.

Karen:

Yes, 'This Student Life'.

Dave:

So, 'This Student Life' is going really, really well. We're now up to Week 18 of the drama.

Karen:

Uh huh

Dave:

There's 3 students who are all having their own problems, as we know.

Karen:

Yep

Dave:

Poor Katie is struggling with finance.

Karen:

Yep

Dave:

Neil with his dyslexia.

Karen:

Yep

Dave:

And life has just been absolutely awful for poor Donna.

Karen:

I know, poor Donna. We're writing the second series quite soon, so if you've got any ideas about how you think the characters should develop, you can always drop us a line at PodMag@open.ac.uk, so let us know who you've enjoyed following the story of, and maybe what you think should happen next.

Dave:

I think an enlarged role for Dave.

Karen:

No, absolutely not. (laughs)

Dave:

Ok, and definitely not for Cheryl in that case. Now, strangely enough, talking about 'This Student Life', a few weeks back I did an interview with Neil from...

Karen:

Yes, the eponymous Neil.

Dave:

Yes

Karen:

I love saying that word.

Dave:

Yes, so do I. I don't have any idea what you're talking about, but anyway, it was Neil who had place of character of the same name. Ah, yeah so (Karen laugh's) and this is what he told us.

(Short break – music plays)

Dave:

So, we are at the recording of 'This Student Life' and I'm with one of the stars, Neil Clarke, who plays a character called Neil. Neil, how have you found playing Neil? (laughs)

Neil:

Err, interesting. It's not something I've done before, so I thought well what the hell, I'll give it a go, so, yeah, it's been interesting, I've enjoyed it so far.

Dave:

It strikes me that, you know, looking at the script, that Neil's mate is obviously far more handsome than he is, and far more intelligent, I mean do you feel that's sort of an accurate portrayal?

Neil:

Not at all (laughs). Umm, well they remind me of Morecambe and Wise actually, the sort of working class Morecambe and Wise, manual labourers.

Dave:

And what about the conference because a lot of the, a lot of the script is about encouraging students to get involved in a conference that is also a first for the Faculty of a student-based conference. How do you feel from a student's perspective, do you think that's something that students ought to be thinking about?

Neil:

Again, it's something that we've not tried before, so I think it's certainly worth trying and, again, we'll see how it goes, we'll see what the feedback looks like. It's an interesting idea, it's certainly worth trying.

Dave:

Ok, Neil Clarke, you're a bit of an idiot! Thank you very much (laughter)

Karen:

Dave, you and Neil, there's just no seriousness there. I don't know how you two seem to function as proper academics.

Dave:

What makes you think we function as proper academics? (laughs)

Karen:

I don't know, but the pair of you...

Dave:

I do.

Karen:

It's ridiculous, I'm going to go off and talk to someone infinitely more sensible.

Dave:

Who are you going to talk to?

Karen:

Well, actually, I've got an appointment with Georgina Blakeley.

Dave:

About what?

Karen:

Oh, she's one of the course team on DD101, and she's gonna tell our students a bit of TMA surgery advice for their assignment.

Dave:

On which assignment precisely?

Karen:

It's for DD101 for those on the 14B presentation, that's the one that started in February, you'll be doing TMA04, it's a big one, so Georgina's got some good advice for you.

Georgina:

TMA04 is a comparing contrast question, and here I think it's helpful to think about any comparing contrast essay as a two-stage process. First, you need to identify and then be able to describe the two approaches that you are going to compare and contrast. In this case, you're talking about the two approaches to social order, one by Fuko and the other by Gothman. In terms of describing these two different approaches, one thing that you could do is to use the different elements of the circuit of knowledge, so for example, what questions are these two theorists asking? What claims are they making as provisional answers to these questions? What concepts are they using and then what evidence are they using to support the different claims? Once you feel confident that you're able to describe these two different approaches, the second step is then to identify and to be able to outline the differences and similarities, and that's the core of the compare and contrast exercise. Now, an important thing here is structure. You really have to have a clear structure in any compare and contrast essay. There are different ways of doing it but I would suggest that the most simple approach, if this is your first compare and contrast essay, is what we call the block method, and now that entails a number of steps, firstly, your introduction in which you outline what you are going to compare and contrast and how your essay is going to approach the question. You would then follow that by one paragraph describing the first approach, a second paragraph then describing the second approach. You would then follow this with a paragraph outlining the similarities and then a paragraph outlining the differences. You would then finish with a conclusion which summarises your key findings, which isn't about saying, at Level 1, whether one approach is better or preferable than another but it might be

about staying that there are more similarities than differences, or vice versa, or perhaps you feel that a particular difference or similarity is more significant in some way. Now, there's just one pitfall really with the block method and that is that there's a danger that you spend far too much time describing each approach and then leave yourself too little space to actually do the core of the essay, which is outlining and describing the similarities and differences, so do make sure that you get on to the similarities and differences quite early on in the essay, so you're not spending all of your time simply describing the two approaches.

Dave:

Ah, well, I always like to hear from Georgina, one of my colleagues in the Politics Department.

Karen:

Yes, and very sensible she is too Dave, none of this photocopying malarch there.

Dave:

No, oh it's jammed again!

Karen:

I know.

Dave:

I'll get it out this time.

Karen:

Ok

Dave:

Just hold this will you?

Karen:

What is it?

Dave:

The ink.

Karen:

Oh

Dave:

Oh, by the way, it has gone on your hands a little bit. (Karen laughs)

Karen:

(Still laughing) It looks like I've been colouring in.

Dave:

It looks like you've been coloured in. Let's have your list.

Karen:

Ok, here you go. Don't get it dirty.

Dave:

Ok, so this is all about the conference, which is fantastic, the conference is going really well, we're really pleased with the progress.

Karen:

Yep, you can have a look at the website, see all the presenters coming up now, and some of our student presenters have been booked in as well with their slots, so it's all looking really good, and tell us what that website address is Dave, because I keep forgetting it because it's saved in my favourites.

Dave:

Which is a good place to put it but in case you've got to get it in to your favourites, first of all you have to navigate your way to connections.kmi.open.ac.uk.

Karen:

Brilliant!

Dave:

And it's looking very good. Now one of the things that's on there is the programme. If you go to the programme on the tab at the top, you can see what's going on, on virtually every day of the conference and it's still a work in progress but it's really nice to see the students' names starting to appear.

Karen

Uh huh

Dave:

And if you click on one of the names you get to their biography, now not all the biographies are there, so we're still adding to it so you want to be checking it out on a regular basis to keep yourself really up-to-date with whose doing what and find out a little bit about them as well.

Karen:

And in the next few weeks we're gonna be taking lots of pictures, so watch all those as they're uploaded on the website.

Dave:

Now of course the student presenters, Karen, have come from the Activate session.

Karen:

Uh huh

Dave:

Let's say a little bit about those.

Karen:

Ah, well the Activate sessions are really loads and loads of fun, we've got the most amazing bunch of students who are coming along and getting involved in a range of ideas, most of them actually listen to the PodMag, so if you're an Activate workshop person, a big shout out to you from the PodMag (laughs).

Dave:

Whoh!

Karen:

And, umm, yeah, no it's really, really good to see these presentations coming up, I mean the whole idea of basically doing a presentation gives you a massive skill, you know, in terms of something you can say hey I've done this with my degree and not only have I been doing all the academic stuff but I've actually presented some of my ideas to other people and had a reaction to them, and that's just something really, really amazing, and for those of you who are involved, I think you should be so proud of yourselves because you're doing an amazing job and I know that everyone is gonna really love what you've got to say.

Dave:

Oh, this photocopier is really starting to drive me nuts! Do you know what?

Karen:

What?

Dave:

I think we must be getting close to lunch time.

Karen:

Do you, why?

Dave:

Well, I'm hungry.

Karen:

Oh

Dave:

Do you think we should go?

Karen:

Shall we go to the Canteen?

Dave:

I'm a bit fed up with this now.

Karen:

I know.

Dave:

I've said all I've got to say. (Karen laughs)

Dave:

I just can't think of anything else worth saying now.

Karen:

That's just coz the list's run out Dave.

Dave:

Well there is just a blank bit which says you...

Karen:

It says end of the list!

Dave:

Well it doesn't even say end of the list, it says you think of something.

Karen:

Well...

Dave:

I mean what sort of instruction is that to give someone like me (laughs).

Karen:

No, I just thought you might want to participate.

Dave:

Well, why?

Karen:

Well, exactly, exactly. It's not worth the effort is it? (laughs).

Dave:

Not at all. I think it's time for us to go.

Karen:

Ok

Dave:

We'll see everyone next week.

Karen:

Yes, bye for now.

Dave:

See you next week.